

## The Royal College of Surgeons of England's blogging guidelines and good practice for the *COVID-19: views from the NHS frontline* blog series

### Introduction

The aim of the *COVID-19: views from the NHS frontline* blog series is to provide a medium for opinions and comment, surrounding the unprecedented times that the world currently finds itself in. We want to encourage posts from surgeons, trainees and members of the wider surgical team, on topics that have affected the personal and working lives of those fighting at the frontline of the pandemic. These include first-hand experiences of caring for patients, equipment, wellbeing and support, and the positive stories of selflessness and comradery, alongside challenges and the lessons that can be learnt.

Blog posts are used to encourage response or debate, as well as disseminating research and analysis. In this respect, blogging differs from academic writing, which requires a more rigid adherence to formal presentation of scientific findings and which is typically aimed at a narrower audience consisting of specialists and professionals.

To aid authors in the creation of their posts and the process to publication, we have developed these guidelines, which include blogging values, style tips and the procedure for submitting to the *COVID-19: views from the NHS frontline* blog series.

### 1. General Principles

- Keep your posts fairly short (**500-700 words**), concise and to the point. Use short paragraphs (two to four lines) and short, punchy sentences.
- Write in the first person to add personality and readability to your blog posts.
- Ensure clear communication: use conversational tone, avoid excessive jargon and unexplained acronyms.
- Be aware that readers of your blog may not be medical professionals. The tone with which you write is important in order not to unduly scare or panic the members of the public that may read your post.
- A good title will likely grab the reader's attention – make it punchy and/or challenging. Questions work well but make sure you then address the question in your blog.
- Be clear about your target audience and the points you are aiming to get across – what messages do you want your audiences to take away from your article?
- Do encourage readers to contribute their perspective, expertise and additional knowledge (posing questions is a good way of encouraging this).
- Do challenge policies which you might disagree with and be constructive in your challenge – suggest solutions or alternatives where possible.
- As blogging is more personal, be careful about blurring fact and opinion and consider carefully how your words could be misinterpreted or misrepresented.

- Ethics: always acknowledge sources quoted (not as footnotes but by using hyperlinks).
- Bloggers **must** be willing to respond to any comments added to their blog posts if appropriate. We aim to respond within one day ideally, but two days at the latest.

## 2. Images

- In our experience, good photographs really increase engagement with the blog.
- Please supply a high quality photograph of yourself with your submission (this can be taken on a smartphone and saved on the highest quality image setting).
- Where possible, please consider submitting any of the following images in addition to the above:
  - those taken in your clinical/hospital environment;
  - images of yourself and/or your colleagues with PPE equipment;
  - any images relevant to the blog topic.
- We understand that you are also working tirelessly and so time may be in short supply. Any imagery that you can supply will be gratefully received.

## 3. Process

- Please include with your submission, any images, alongside a short biography, your affiliation, email address and any social media details. The email address to submit to is [content@rcseng.ac.uk](mailto:content@rcseng.ac.uk).
- Articles will be reviewed for acceptance or rejection; if accepted they will then be edited by a member of the RCS team.
- A member of the RCS team will then confirm a potential 'go live' date with the author.
- When published, articles will be promoted on Twitter and other social media platforms.
- Any comments added from readers will be forwarded on to the author for information/response (as appropriate).
- If you need any further advice or assistance please do get in touch with us at [content@rcseng.ac.uk](mailto:content@rcseng.ac.uk).

## 4. Legal liability

The Royal College of Surgeons is legally liable for the content of blog posts on its website, so please do not submit anything that might give people reason to take out a claim against us. Please do not include anything in your post, which could be taken as obscene, offensive, defamatory or otherwise illegal. This includes material which promotes discrimination on any grounds. Please do not post any material which has been disclosed to you in confidence or which compromises the privacy of anyone other than yourself.